Interview keywords/topics: Ireland and Appalachia, Community

Interviewer: JG
Interviewee: GG

JG (00:00):

<silence> This interview is part of an oral history project for WRC 2202, a Spring 2024 course about Ireland and Appalachia. This semester we discuss different ways of using and understanding historical information, and we are creating our own historical documents in this project. My name is JG, and today I'm gonna be talking to GG. It is April 18th, 2024, and we are in Belk Library. How are you doing, GG?

GG (00:29):

I'm pretty good [00:00:30] on this sunny day.

JG (00:32):

It is a sunny day. <laugh>

GG (00:33):

Beautiful. Not that, not that any of you can see it.

JG (00:36):

Well, <laugh>, sorry, I'm <laugh>. Well, it'll, you know, it's good for them to know. Um, <laugh>, GG, I wanted to ask you, what is your major here at App State?

GG (00:49):

Um, I am a studio art major here at App. Uh, I only just, I'm a junior here at App State. I've been here all three years and I only just finally [00:01:00] decided on my major this past summer, so. I originally was an anthropology major for my first two years, but I decided to switch because I realized I had been taking more studio classes than any other form of class, and I felt like that was a sign, <laugh>.

JG (01:19):

Well, that's awesome. Um, you know, as an art major, I I, I would like to ask you about your perspective on, there's been some controversy lately around Wey Hall, which is the main art [00:01:30] building. Uh, yeah. What has your experience been with all that?

GG (01:34):

Well, okay, so Wey Hall started going under construction maybe like a year and a half ago. We all knew that it was coming, like it's been in the works for a while, but, um, so I've been going to class in a construction zone, which is Wey Hall and also in East Hall, which is a condemned dorm building where they moved the entire or half of the art department because [00:02:00] we couldn't go to school in our building anymore. Um, it's been not the best, the biggest problems in East is the, it's really dirty. They can't come and clean it because of like the dorm rules or whatever. Um, there's non drinkable water in both Wey and in East, um, East is pretty unventilated, which is like a major problem considering we use all sorts of like, different chemicals and stuff that are like detrimental to your health at certain degrees. [00:02:30] Um, but Wey is definitely like the hub of the problems. Recently we had a bunch of issues, um, namely being, there were two giant chunks of concrete that fell out of the ceiling and there were students in the building and there, I mean, we were like in class and stuff. And then a couple days later

we were told that that never happened, even though it most, Hey, y'all, in the future. It definitely happened a hundred percent <laugh>. [00:03:00] Oh my goodness. But yeah, that's it. Yeah. Professors and students, we are just pushing through <laugh>,

JG (03:07):

So, so I guess you're saying the professors and the students are on the, the same side for this. Who, I guess who is the conflict against if there's this issue?

GG (03:17):

I honestly, I wish that I didn't have to say it like sides, but truly it, to a degree it does feel like it's admin versus students and faculty. Like, we have been [00:03:30] going through these issues for a year and a half, honestly, since construction started, and only recently has admin even said a word about any of the things that are happening. And they told us, they were like, well, none of you guys told us. And we were like, girl, yes we did. What do you mean? You're lying. But anyways, it's, it's a little tense between, I mean, specifically in the art department, but honestly like campus wide. I feel like there's been a lot of like tense [00:04:00] feelings I feel between admin and students. Um, I know Miss Sheri is now leaving. That's crazy.

JG (04:08):

Could, could you just say for the people in the future who Sheri is?

GG (04:12):

Miss Sheri is our dean of student or chancellor. Oh my gosh. I lied guys. She's the chancellor. I don't know why I said Dean <laugh>, um, and she's leaving. But I, from, I have, all I ever heard from the student body were negative comments on her. I did not, I did hear any big Sheri fans [00:04:30] out there, but you know, that's how it is. It's unfortunate. Yeah.

JG (04:36):

Well, I I, I heard you say that, you know, obviously the experience in the art department has been a little complicated lately, but you generalized that to the campus as a whole. I was wondering if you have any more examples of situations like that, that you've seen on campus or maybe friends who are in those?

GG (04:54):

I mean, I feel like, uh, another, just one example that I can, my roommate is [00:05:00] a rec management major, and recently they're, they've had an issue of lack of funding too, where they need these like safety ropes for whatever field trip they were going on, and they were told by admin, like, oh, well we don't have the money to replace 'em, so we're just gonna have to cut out that field trip. Like, sorry, you can't go on that. And that's like a part of the curriculum that they've been doing for years and years. And I don't know, that's just like, I know that these things are small, but in the grand scheme of things, they will [00:05:30] add up and have larger negative impacts on the students, I feel. C'est la vie.

JG (05:39):

<laugh>. Well, I, I noticed that you point out that that friend is not in the arts department. Is your community on campus, is that mostly art students or is it broader? Do you have a lot of friends of different majors?

GG (05:50):

Um, I, while the art community is very, like, significant in Boone, and I would say that a lot of my friends are [00:06:00] in the art community, like I see them all the time. All we do is hangout in Wey Hall together. But I would say most of my friends are, have majors like all over, like rec management, business, classic, we've got some <laugh>, environmental science, you know, um, I have a couple of friends that are bio majors, you know, all over. But that's what's really nice about App is like, you don't, it's, I feel like it's really easy to make friends in all different sorts of like [00:06:30] paths and it's a really nice way to like learn new things from other people. I don't know, it's really fun.

JG (06:37):

That's great. I know we were talking a little bit before turning on the microphone, which, you know, we're new to interviewing, sorry, <laugh>, but I know that you mentioned that you were in a sorority. I was wondering if you could tell us a little bit about that experience?

GG (06:50):

Oh yeah. Well, I am, I'm in a sorority. I also, another example, I have two roommates and they're both in two different sororities from what I'm in, I'm in [00:07:00] Sigma Kappa, which is, um, one, the one sorority on campus that has five philanthropies associated with us. And they spell out the first letter of each of the names spell out the word sigma. That's a fun fact.

JG (07:15):

That is a fun fact.

GG (07:16):

Ain't that crazy. Um, and I would say them to you, but it would take me a long time.

JG (07:21):

<laugh>.

GG (07:21):

But yeah, Sig Kap is awesome. We do all sorts of, I mean we have like the classic date functions and mixers with fraternities and other sororities. But then we also [00:07:30] have like all of our philanthropy events, our main one being silent disco in the spring, which is so fun. You go and then you wear headphones and there's like three different channels and you all dance together listening to music, and then you take off your headphones that it's really weird and awkward and everyone's dancing in a silent room, but it's really fun.

JG (07:50):

Well, that, I mean, that does sound pretty great. Where I, I know you said it was for charity. What charity is it for?

GG (07:54):

Yes. Okay, so the Silent Disco, our main philanthropy is for the Alzheimer's Association. That's [00:08:00] like I every um, Greek organization has like a main philanthropy that they support or that like is

representative of that organization. And ours is, um, the Alzheimer's Association. And in the fall we have Walk to End Alzheimer's, which is like a 5K, and then in the spring we have silent disco and all the funds for it go. I think we made like maybe four thou over a little over $4,000 this year.

JG (08:24):

Wow. Four, yeah.

GG (08:26):

That's great. It's really awesome. Yeah. Very fun.

JG (08:29):

<laugh>. [00:08:30] Well, as, as I mentioned right at the beginning of this interview, this is part of an oral history project for our WRC 2202 class, which is about Ireland and Appalachia. And I was curious, uh, I think, I think you had mentioned that you were from the Appalachian region and I was curious how or if your understanding of Appalachian history and culture has changed this semester?

GG (08:54):

Yeah, so I have not said this on the interview, but I am from out of state. I'm not originally from [00:09:00] North Carolina. I'm from Alabama, so, um, technically still a part of Appalachia, but like deep south, I'm from north Alabama, a little town called Athens. And I grew up like in, in the heart of what I feel like most people think of when you think of Southern Appalachia. And I kind of took this class because I was like, oh, I'm gonna pull up in here already knowing everything. And then I realized that there was an Ireland side to it. And I know I did not know anything about Irish history, [00:09:30] but I do now. I know more than I did when I first entered, but honestly, I really, my favorite part was the Appalachian history section because it really, like, I feel like I did learn, or at least came to appreciate this area a lot more.

GG (09:47):

Um, I grew up in an area where there were like people of all different backgrounds. My father is an orthodontist, so I came from a more well off middle, upper middle class family. But, um, I mean [00:10:00] we did all the same things that every, I mean, I grew up mudding and like hunting and cow tipping and having silly parties in like fields, all the good stuff. Um, I was telling you, I was telling Jess the other day, my most Appalachian story was when I was very young. Um, we, my first dog, his name is Ziggy, I was on a rabbit hunt with my dad and some friends and we were hunting and a rabbit hunt is not like a deer hunt where you have to sit and [00:10:30] like be really quiet. You like, you're walking around and you're just gabbing with your friends and you have, you're just like walking through fields looking for the rabbits.

GG (10:37):

And so it's fun and you can like chat and stuff. And we were walking around and all of a sudden we were like, uhoh, where's the dog he's missing, where did he go? And so we all, we stop the hunt and we go home, we go back to the cars and we get in the cars and we start driving down the road and we're like, he's gotta be on the side of the road somewhere. Like he can't be far. And we pull up and there's this little, there's a little trailer house like on the side of the road and we're like, huh, there's a dog out front that looks a lot like our [00:11:00] dog and he's squatting, like he's not sitting on the dirt, which our dog refused to sit on anything but carpet because I don't know. Um, and it turns out this the, our dog had like

ran down the road and this old man had taken him and put him on like a chain and chained him to the front of his trailer home.

GG (11:17):

And he came out with his shotgun and was like, what are y'all doin' on my property, <laugh>, get off my property. And my dad was like, that's our dog. Can we please have him back? And he was like, nah, that's my dog. I don't know what you talking about. He's been my dog [00:11:30] for years, <laugh>. And, and it was in fact not his dog and it was our dog. And we ended up getting him back and I watched this whole thing from the inside of the car and I can remember thinking, wow, I'm really glad that I'm not the one that has to talk to this old man. But anytime I tell that story, everyone looks at me like I'm crazy. And I don't know, like to me it feels like, oh, that happens. Like I had plenty of friends that had that happen with their dogs. But like when I tell that story, like anywhere outside of the southeast, honestly, I feel like people are like, that's [00:12:00] crazy. Like you live in an unsafe area. <laugh>.

JG (12:05):

Oh my goodness. Well, thank, thank you for sharing that story. I know

GG (12:08):

Sorry that was really long.

JG (12:09):

No, no, it's fine. Um, I, I know you kind of prefaced it by saying that that was your most stereotypical experience of Appalachia and in this class we kind of explored both the stereotypes and some things that challenged that. And I was wondering, you know, being an art major I think is maybe something that might be a little bit contrary [00:12:30] to that, like rabbit hunting activity. Do you feel like, yeah, what do you, what do you think about that? Do you feel like you're challenging those stereotypes or do you think it fits in?

GG (12:38):

I mean, honestly like I, I feel like as, as much as it is to be like, oh, I'm an art major, like there's a lot of, of folk art in Appalachia that I feel like is like, people maybe don't think first off like, oh, Appalachia is a place of art and craft. Like, it's just like a subconscious like knowledge, [00:13:00] you know what I mean? Like you think like quilts and like music and bluegrass and all that stuff. And that is so integral to being an art major, which is why I feel like Boone and Asheville and the surrounding areas have such like a blooming art community and such like a vibrant art community of, of lots of young people. Like I feel like one of the few places that still draws young people into this area is within like the craft, like metalsmithing, ceramics, fibers, like [00:13:30] all of that sort of stuff is what brings in like what keeps this area like thriving in my opinion. This is what I think.

JG (13:38):

Yeah. Well, I I didn't ask earlier, what area of studio art are you, like, what are you wanting to do with your future?

GG (13:45):

Okay, yeah. So technically I do have, I'm not getting a BFA in studio art, which would mean that I would be taking, I would have to have a concentration. So I'm getting a BA so I don't need the concentration. So I can take whatever studio classes I want, but I'm mostly [00:14:00] take metals and ceramics classes. So I, I do 3D work. That's, that's my, my happy place, <laugh>.

JG (14:07):

That's really cool. Do you know what kind of job you'd like to get with that in the future?

GG (14:11):

Yeah, I'm really hoping to become a professor. Honestly, the professors here really just, I had no idea what I wanted to do until like, honestly I had the professors at App State and I realized like, wow, y'all really like bring so much into like my life. And I know the other people around [00:14:30] me like appreciate so much like what they do and like, I don't know, it's so cool. They get to, they get to do art and then also teach the newest generation art, it's really cool.

JG (14:41):

Yeah. That's really nice. Well, GG, is there anything else that you would like to let the people of the future know before we sign off here?

GG (14:50):

Um, honestly, I don't, I don't really think I do, but this is, this was really lovely and fun. [00:15:00] Yeah. Oh, I hope all your people out there are living your best life. <laugh>.

JG

<laugh>. Alright, well I think that's a great place to end it.

GG

Bye now.

JG

Bye.